

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, MARR, IC, NATO

SUBJECT: IDF RETENTION ISSUE: PRIMIN SPEAKS ON DEFENSE

REF: REYKJAVIK 0197

1. IN FEBRUARY 7 SPEECH TO REYKJAVIK LOCAL PROGRESSIVE PARTY CHAPTER, PRIMIN OLAFUR JOHANNESSEN MADE FOLLOWING REMARKS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE AFFAIRS WHICH HAVE JUST BEEN PUBLISHED IN PARTY NEWSPAPER TIMINN FEB. 15:

2. QUOTE: THERE IS NOTHING IN THE PLATFORM AGREEMENT WHICH SAYS THAT THE DEFENSE FORCE MUST LEAVE DURING THE PRESENT ELECTORAL PERIOD. THE POLICY IS THAT IT SHOULD LEAVE. THIS FORMULATION WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT. IT WAS USED IN ORDER TO ALLOW US TO BE FLEXIBLE AND WITH THE AIM THAT THE DEFENSE FORCE SHOULD LEAVE IN STAGES. IF IT HAD BEEN INTENDED WITHOUT RESERVATION, THEN THE WORDING WOULD HAVE BEEN RIGHT TO THE POINT: THE IDF IS TO LEAVE DURING THE ELECTORAL PERIOD. BUT THIS WAS NOT SAID AND THERE IS NO RIGHT TO READ THAT MEANING INTO THIS SENTENCE. OUR IDEAS NEED NOT BE PUT ON OUR BEHALF AS AN ULTIMATUM EITHER TO OUR MEMBER PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT OR TO THE AMERICANS. WE

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MUST BE PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE BOTH REGARDING OUR SUPPORTERS, IN ORDER TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON HOW THE PROPOSALS WILL BE

PUT FORTH, AND ALSO REGARDING THE AMERICANS, IF WE ARE GOING TO SOLVE THIS ISSUE THROUGH AGREEMENTS. I CONSIDER THAT AN IMPORTANT POINT AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT IT BE POSSIBLE TO SOLVE THIS ISSUE THROUGH PEACEFUL NEGOTIATION WITH THE AMERICANS SO THAT BOTH SIDES WILL FEEL THAT THE AGREEMENTS REACHED ARE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL. I AM OF THE OPINION THAT ICELAND SHOULD PURSUE A POLICY OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL NATIONS AND IT WILL BE THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR POLICY TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE AMERICANS. THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT IS DRAWN UP IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT MIGHT TO A QUITE EXTENSIVE DEGREE BE POSSIBLE TO REACH OUR GOAL THROUGH THE AGREEMENT ITSELF. IT IS CLEARLY STATED IN PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE AGREEMENT THAT THE ICELANDIC AUTHORITIES HAVE THE POWER OF APPROVAL ON HOW MANY MEMBERS ARE TO BE IN THE DEFENSE FORCE IN THIS COUNTRY. WE COULD, THEREFORE, USING THIS METHOD, HAVE IT IN OUR HANDS TO PURSUE THIS GOAL WHICH IS THE POLICY OF THE PLATFORM STATEMENT, EVEN THOUGH A NOTICE WAS NOT GIVEN UNDER THIS AGREEMENT. THIS ISSUE IS QUITE A PROBLEM FOR MANY REASONS AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELITTLE IT. IT CARRIES WITH IT STRONG FEELINGS BUT I THINK IT NECESSARY TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE SENSIBLY AND LET SENSIBILITY RULE RATHER THAN FEELINGS. I DO NOT WANT TO FOOL ANYONE. IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT THE DEFENSE WILL HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY BY THE END OF THE ELECTORAL PERIOD. END QUOTE.

3. IN SAME ISSUE OF TIMINN, YOUNG PROGRESSIVE'S PAGE CARRIED THINLY-DISGUISED ATTACK ON PRIMIN'S POLICIES BY CLAIMING THAT TIMINN EDITOR TOMAS KARLSSON WAS VIOLATING WILL OF MAJORITY OF PARTY BY EDITORIALY SUPPORTING SUCH POLICIES. YOUNG PROGRESSIVES SAID THAT IF PARTY WERE TO GO IN DIRECTION ADVOCATED BY KARLSSON ON DEFENSE MATTERS (THAT IS, REDUCTING RATHER THAN REMOVING IDF) THEY WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER WHAT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARTY SHOULD BE. THIS WAS, OF COURSE, AN IMPLIED THREAT TO BOLT PARTY.

4. COMMENT: WITH "DEFENDED COUNTRY" PETITION NOW HAVING COLLECTED ABOUT 41,000 SIGNATURES (OR APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF TOTAL ELECTORATE), PRIMIN MAY HAVE FELT TIME APPROPRIATE TO TAKE STRONGER PUBLIC STAND IN LINE WITH WHAT WE HAVE LONG THOUGHT WERE HIS PRIVATE OPINIONS. HIS WORDS CAN ONLY
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INCREASE TENSIONS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY SINCE THEY, IN EFFECT, CHALLENGE YOUNG PROGRESSIVES TO DO THEIR WORST.
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